

today's hotelier

December 2021 | todayshotelier.com

Official Publication of AAHOA



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Vinay Patel

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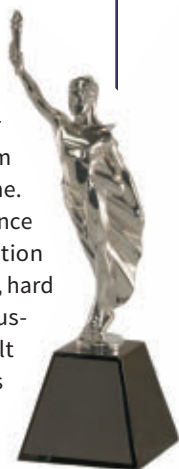
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5 Things To Know About AAHOA This Month

1

TODAY'S HOTELIER WINS A PLATINUM MARCOM AWARD!

We are over-the-moon excited to announce that *Today's Hotelier* was recognized with a platinum award for print media, magazine. MarCom Awards honors excellence in marketing and communication while recognizing the creativity, hard work, and generosity of industry professionals. A heartfelt THANKS to all our contributors and advertisers who helped us earn this recognition.



INVEST IN YOURSELF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.

While it may be the season of giving, AAHOA is encouraging you to invest in YOU! Take time this month to renew your membership, earn a certificate, watch and share from our library of 240+ webcasts, and make plans to attend AAHOACON22. You can find everything on AAHOA.com.



2

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There's no better time to contribute to Kennesaw State University's Michael Leven and Lee Dushoff AAHOA Scholarship for Compassionate Leadership. The scholarship provides financial assistance to exceptional students in the hospitality program. Your donation is fully tax deductible, so please consider giving today. To learn more, visit community.kennesaw.edu/AAHOA.



KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

4

WE'RE READY FOR 2022.

We're now in the last month of what continues to be a challenging time for our industry. We're grateful for our members, Industry Partners, and countless others who have helped AAHOA Members in 2021. Happy new year, and all of us on Team AAHOA are wishing you a great end of the year. ■



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VINAY PATEL
AAHOA CHAIR (2021-2022)

“
It’s a reminder
that we’re not
alone and have
a vast array of
resources that
keep us going
during turbulent
times.”

Getting there together

LAST MONTH, THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION LIFTED A BAN IMPLEMENTED ON FOREIGN travelers as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The policy now requires travelers to be fully vaccinated and to test negative for the virus. Shortly after that announcement, the administration announced it would allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals from Canada and Mexico to enter the United States after a 19-month freeze.

These are significant steps toward economic recovery and the revival of travel and the hotel industry.

Earlier this year, AAHOA called for new measures to restart international travel safely and pressed the administration on the financial toll the travel ban took on small businesses. AAHOA also is working with the administration to promote vaccine awareness in the hospitality industry.

So, why are we so aggressive when it comes to advocacy initiatives? The U.S. Travel Association releases statistics every year highlighting the economic importance of travel and tourism to the American economy, and the global economy.

The research firm Tourism Economics prepared end-of-year totals for the U.S. Travel Association, which showed employment for 11% of the U.S. workforce was supported by travel and tourism prior to the onset of COVID-19. It also showed that the travel industry’s economic footprint in the United States dropped from \$2.6 trillion to \$1.5 trillion, or 42%, in 2020.

And the most eye-opening report from The U.S. Travel Association showed employment devastation, stating: “Travel-supported jobs fell by 5.6 million last year, a whopping 65% of all American jobs lost to the economic fallout of the pandemic.”

While most industries faced some sort of fallout, the hospitality industry, which relies on social interaction and in-person environments, wasn’t only concerned about survival from the virus itself but with economic survival as well.

I remember reading about how certain hotels were pivoting, coming up with ideas like à la carte options or waiving cancellation fees, trying to figure out a way to remain in the black while the numbers in their budgets declined at a rapid rate.

During Thanksgiving, as we went around the table saying what we were thankful for this year, one of the first things that came to mind was the AAHOA family. It’s times like these where I’m thankful for AAHOA’s 20,000 members and our dominance in the industry, representing 60% of the hotels in the country.

It’s a reminder that we’re not alone and have a vast array of resources that keep us going during turbulent times.

Everyone has been affected by COVID-19 in one way or another, and while you could argue that our industry was hit the hardest, we’re also the luckiest. We’re surrounded by others who can relate, lend an ear, and offer advice. How many other industries can say the same?

Enjoy the holiday season with your family and friends. Here’s wishing you all a very Happy New Year! ■



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KEN GREENE
AAHOA
PRESIDENT & CEO

““
We want to help you measure your success, but more importantly, we want to help you be successful, in whatever way that looks like for you.”

How do you measure success?

“Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes. How do you measure? Measure a year?” – *Seasons of Love*, by Jonathan Larson

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PUT A WRENCH IN ALL OF OUR PLANS, AND THE HOTEL industry was hit especially hard. Business travel and tourism decreased dramatically. The cost of labor started rising, and hiring and maintaining employees became a struggle. The cost of PPE and other safety equipment had business owners scrambling to restructure their budgets.

As we close out 2021 and reflect on the past year, we also can point out some wins, and light at the end of the tunnel, for our industry. One such win was the Small Business Administration approving billions of investment dollars for small businesses.

Despite all the setbacks, the pandemic also forced us to take a hard look in the mirror and helped us do some soul searching. Some people left the only industry they’ve ever known. Some people thought, “Well, I have nothing to lose,” and tried something new. Some lost everything. Many had to pivot.

So, how do you measure success?

Perhaps it was how much money you made or your business’s profitability. Perhaps it was being able to spend more time with loved ones, having a strong work-life balance. For some, maybe it was based on achievements or how you spent your time.

The reality is, most of us probably changed how we measure success when we had to adjust nearly every part of our lives due to the pandemic. For some, success became simply making ends meet, putting food on the table, or learning to do things virtually.

It’s the time of year when many people make New Year’s resolutions. 2022 is a new year and a new opportunity. We are leaving 2021 behind and have high expectations and hopes for the future.

Since starting at AAHOA, one of my top goals was ensuring that we were helping you, our members, and millions of Americans in the hotel industry, who depend on our legislative advocacy efforts and leadership. My vision for AAHOA’s future, and my vision for 2022, includes doubling down on our advocacy work.

AAHOA’s Oxford Economics study quantified our impact on the industry. While we always measure our success on how we’re serving our members, this data helps us visualize how far AAHOA’s reach truly is.

AAHOA is here for you and will continue to be in the future. We want to help you measure your success, but more importantly, we want to help you be successful, in whatever way that looks like for you.

Happy New Year, and cheers to your next successes. ■



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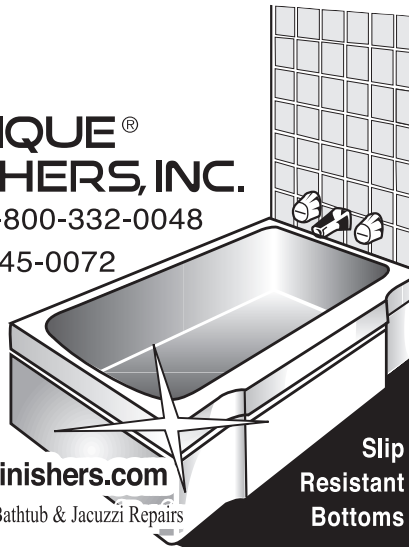
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COVID-19 relief roundup

by SEAN GROSSNICKLE

THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION rose to the forefront of the federal government's response to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19. Since March 2020, the agency has delivered more than \$1.1 trillion in relief funds that supported countless small businesses. The SBA received considerable attention from Congress due to the pandemic's widespread and adverse impact on small businesses to stimulate economic activity and keep Americans on the payroll. Throughout the duration of the pandemic, Congress and the White House rallied time and time again to pass legislation that appropriated billions of dollars for the SBA's relief programs.

After nearly two years, the SBA's pandemic relief programming is slated to lapse as the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan program expires on December 31. Barring Congressional action, the EIDL will join the Paycheck Protection Program, Restaurant Revitalization Fund, and Shutter Venues Grant as SBA COVID-19

relief options no longer accepting applications. Given the unprecedented volume of funds appropriated to these programs, the SBA will continue to process EIDL applications through the end of the year or until funds run out.

The recent passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a \$550 billion bipartisan infrastructure package, resulted in several billion dollars being reclaimed from the SBA's EIDL and targeted EIDL programs. AAHOA is evaluating this rescission and will continue to communicate with our partners at the SBA so that AAHOA Members are apprised of the latest information. After passing the IJJA, Congress shifted focus to negotiations over the final phase of President Biden's economic agenda.

The proposed \$1.75 trillion reconciliation spending package is a tax and social spending plan prioritizing clean energy, paid family leave, drug price negotiations, and more. At the time this article was penned, the Congressional Budget Office had yet to

release a cost estimate of the legislation, suspending the timeline of the bill's path forward. In its current state, the SBA would receive funding to maintain some existing programs and create new ones.

As Congress moves forward with discussion over the reconciliation package, AAHOA continues to work at the state and local levels to maximize the utility of funds, grants, and programming that has already been appropriated. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, state and local governments received billions of dollars in aid. AAHOA and its partner state associations are actively negotiating to have as much of this funding as possible directed to hotels and the workers and communities they support. Recently, Prince William County in Virginia utilized ARPA relief to create a \$10 million grant program, \$4 million of which is directed to the Lift Up Lodging Program. AAHOA welcomes the program in Prince William County and will continue to advocate for sound public policy to bolster the hospitality industry's recovery. ■



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Lessons in leadership

Taking a closer look at a lifetime of service to the industry and the invaluable experience gained along the way with Vinay Patel, Principal, Head of External Affairs with SREE Hotels

by CARTER DAVIS

CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY?

Vinay Patel: The hospitality industry is the only industry I've worked in. During college, I bartended and waited tables when I was on campus, and when I was home for the holidays I worked in all the different roles within a hotel, including houseman, housekeeping, sales, and even management. After college, I worked for Days Inns of America in Parsippany, NJ, as a franchise services manager. I learned the day-to-day basics of hotel operation while in college, but it was at Days Inn where I got the chance to learn the franchisor side of the business. As I learned and grew, I became the lead franchise services manager, later getting promoted to director of field marketing, eventually becoming the VP of marketing for Knights Franchise System. In 2009, I was afforded the opportunity to become the VP of marketing and brand manager for Microtel.

WHAT HAS KEPT YOU HERE?

VP: It's pretty simple, actually. I love the industry, so that's why I've stayed. Our business brings something new every day. I've told our team, and I believe it as well, that the day you think you know everything there is to know about the hotel industry is the day you find a different industry to be part of.

CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT SREE'S MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A STRONG TEAM?

VP: We are a lead-by-example organization. Everyone in leadership has been in the trenches and will never ask anyone to do something he or she hasn't done or isn't willing to do. We refer to our GMs as the CEOs of their hotels. They know they're in the role because they deserve to be in the role. And we don't mind someone making a mistake if they learn from it and don't continue to repeat it. I don't like looking over shoulders, and our team is in place because they deserve to be. The philosophy is, if the

ball drops, pick it up and keep moving. If it drops and breaks, pick it up, fix it, and keep moving. If it drops, breaks, and you can't fix it, ask for help, and we'll fix it together and keep moving. At every management meeting, I stress the importance of our line-level team members. Our industry's success comes from the bottom up. If our line-level team members are happy and feel respected, they will in turn do what it takes to ensure a guest's satisfaction and return.

WHAT PATTERNS HAS THE SREE TEAM IDENTIFIED DURING THE PANDEMIC THAT MIGHT PROVE USEFUL FOR FUTURE PLANNING?

VP: Our biggest discovery was learning how efficient we can really be. We've learned how to better cross train our teams to ensure people can perform more than one function at the hotel. We also learned as an industry that we don't have to give everything away as we have in the past. And this wasn't just brand driven. We, as

owners and operators, were part of it as we thought the practice would give us a competitive advantage. The airlines took the opportunity after 9/11 to take back some control of their industry, and we now have an opportunity to try to take back some control as well.

CAN YOU GIVE ANY ADVICE ON PLANNING AHEAD FOR POTENTIAL FLUCTUATIONS IN REVENUE DUE TO ECONOMIC SLOWDOWNS?

VP: We have to be creative, not only in the way we sell or seek out business but also in how we run our operations. You have to be nimble and, most importantly, have a good team. At SREE, we didn't lay off any of our salaried team members during COVID as the culture we worked tirelessly to build over the years would have been extremely difficult to reestablish quickly. This also built loyalty within our team and helped energize them during these trying times.

ARE THERE ISSUES IN THE INDUSTRY THAT HAVE BEEN IGNORED AS HOTELIERS HAVE DEVOTED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE PANDEMIC FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS?

VP: I don't think we've ignored things as much as deferred a great number of items. We sometimes forget we're in the experience business. To some extent, that approach has taken a back seat during the past few months. Experience doesn't necessarily mean we have free offerings. It's about how guests feel when they're at the hotel and after they leave.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A HOTELIER STRUGGLING TO STAY AFLOAT?

VP: Build a great team and do what it takes to maintain it. We are a very resilient industry and we will rebound. In my mind, travel is a birthright for Americans, and we've seen this in the rebound in leisure travel. Business travel will come back to a new normal, whatever that will be, but we're convinced that travel and face-to-face meetings will remain a necessity.

Zoom works when you have an established relationship, but you can't build a relationship on Zoom.

WHAT TRAITS HAVE YOU SEEN IN SOME OF THE BEST LEADERS THAT OTHERS MIGHT CULTIVATE IN THEMSELVES?

VP: Empathy and a willingness to listen and act are critical for leaders in our industry. And you must love people. Arne Sorenson was a perfect example of a leader who personified all of these traits. I've always said that our business isn't rocket science. All you need is an attitude and work ethic and you can find success in hospitality. I can teach you what to do, but I can't teach you to smile and to want to work. ■



Our industry's success comes from the bottom up. If our line-level team members are happy and feel respected, they will in turn do what it takes to ensure a guest's satisfaction and return."



Vinay Patel
Principal, Head of
External Affairs
SREE Hotels



Putting a plan together

Strategies for select-service hotels from 2021 to 2025

by LARRY and ADAM MOGELONSKY



WHEN CHARLES DICKENS PENNED THE PERENNIALY famous best-of-times-worst-of-times opener to “A Tale of Two Cities” in 1859, one can wonder if he had a fever dream of 2020 and its long-term effects for hotels. While coastal resorts have experienced record ADR, midtown full-service properties have floundered. The group and convention segment business has yet to be rekindled, and corporate activity is sputtering. Internationally sourced business has yet to fully return. Overall, leisure guests, usually within driving distance of any property, have been the short-term panacea for our industry.



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Meanwhile, properties are frustrated over rising labor costs, an inability to bring back members at the supervisory level, and, for many, a sheer lack of available staff at any cost – ‘the great quitting’ as it’s sometimes called. With supply chains disrupted, purchasing backorders are becoming commonplace. Cost inflation is a common concern and, of course, the politicized COVID-19 vaccination requirement situation dominates many business forecasts.

With this backdrop, why is there so much optimism for the collective future of hospitality? First, the construction pipeline is approaching record levels and technology has reached the tipping point of genuine cost-effectiveness for almost every hotel. Many of the issues that we are facing, labor shortage for one, aren’t going away. But, the skillful operator will find a way through this jungle and look back at this period as

a monumental pivot point for hospitality management and bottom-line savings.

THE LABOR DILEMMA

Examine this chain reaction: Pandemic-based staff reductions lead to furloughs and layoffs. Idle workers, armed with generous government support, reexamine their circumstances and opt to retrain or seek new ventures. Gig economy jobs fuel immediate part- or full-time options. Workers today think less about corporate loyalty and more about their own personal balance. Having interviewed many former frontline staffers recently, the best question that summarizes this mental shift runs along the lines of, “Why work so hard in an exhausting, stressful, and largely unappreciative environment that all you end

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Having interviewed many former frontline staffers recently, the best question that summarizes this mental shift runs along the lines of, “Why work so hard in an exhausting, stressful, and largely unappreciative environment that all you end up doing in your downtime is emotionally decompressing from work?”

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The restive jolt that was the pandemic for many also was a moment of clarity. Do you live to work? Or can you find a way to work to live?

As a result, when hotels started to reopen and workers were recalled, staff asked themselves why they should work in a hectic environment for roughly \$20 an hour, and often less. We’ve heard of hotels offering to increase base wage rates for hourly workers by \$4 or \$5, often with only limited conversion success. This type of wage pressure isn’t a minor variation to the financial forecast. Only those who can afford it – that is, the luxury segment – can maintain service levels. Still, many others are dipping into their PIP reserves to stay afloat.

And it isn’t just hourly staff who are under pressure. Salaried workers now tend to consider their employment as a job vs. a career. It’s merely a stepping stone to a better or bigger job at another property or to another industry entirely. Management ranks have been thinned or are suffering from long-term succession-planning problems, with many managers now wearing more than one hat as they attempt to cover multiple responsibilities. Continued uncertainty means many operators are holding the line on further management staffing, but two severe consequences of this lack of coverage may be burnout and turnover.

But there are solutions that hotels of every size can implement. Here are just a few:

1 TNT
In this instance, “TNT” isn’t dynamite but rather “teams and tech.” Teams address the labor crisis through a concentration on human resource techniques to ensure each member of your organizational structure is valued on an emotional level, as coupled with supplemental outsourcing. Technology seeks out those solutions that ease pressure on your entire team through process automation and the elimination of repetitive, non-stimulative tasks.

All operators need to learn how to survive with lean teams, recognizing that your team members are the property’s most valuable asset. Engagement is critical to boost productivity and maintain their commitment to the tasks at hand. In a word, think “intrapreneur,” whereby only those people who are fully engaged will be the ones to bring new ideas forward while all others will simply do their jobs to the minimum expected standard.

2 TEMPORARY OUTSOURCING
Outsourcing often provides a temporary solution to staffing shortfalls. Your reservations team no longer has to be on property. Reservation outsourcing not only reduces staff but offers

the advantage of 24-hour operations to further reduce lost revenue from abandoned calls.

Housekeeping is typically your largest labor department. While difficult to fully outsource, consider teams of an outsourced helper, combined with a staff housekeeper to turbo-charge efforts. Janitorial services for public areas are a logical option in times when hiring is difficult. An especially interesting concept in outsourcing is in foodservice, where meals can be prepackaged to eliminate in-kitchen requirements.

On the management side, just as you probably use a payroll service, almost all accounting services can be outsourced. Moreover, external services can be used to manage benefits, purchase orders, government grants, and other accounting-related activities. Outsourced recruitment for management positions provides for expert evaluation of capabilities as well as meeting diversity requirements.

3 EFFICIENCY GAINS
If the pandemic has done anything positive for the hotel industry, it’s the universal guest acceptance of contactless activities such as check-in and checkout. This isn’t surprising as the grocery industry has preconditioned the guest to this form of transaction.





Mobile technology now has the ability to add an SMS function that further reduces labor demands on the front desk. Keys can be distributed directly to the mobile device as well as to upsell amenities like the fitness center, pool, locker rooms, or minibar. Every service that can build total guest revenue (TRevPAR) can and should be mobile-available, including dining reservations, gift shop purchases, or event-space bookings. While the number of vendors offering this service renders it ubiquitous, the option also exists to combine functionality into a single application.

BACK-OF-HOUSE CONSOLIDATION
Obvious to many already, housekeeping-management systems optimize the efforts of your top labor department, providing shift automation and routing your teams so you can turn room inventory efficiently. Systems integrate with your PMS and other departments such as engineering and procurement. And they can sync directly to

Conduct better meetings










Your team’s time is a precious asset that must be respected and not treated as a commodity. Here are some best practices for conducting better meetings, thus better utilizing a team’s time.

-  For each meeting, set a fixed date and time using scheduling software.
-  Follow the stand-up rule with no meeting lasting longer than you can comfortably stand, or 30 to 45 minutes max.
-  All meetings must have a specific agenda distributed to participants in advance. Allow invitees to opt out as necessary.
-  Finish each meeting with an action plan.

Management matters



It's time for your entire executive team to step up to the plate and make a difference. Here are a few examples of ways you can train better leaders and establish a healthy workplace culture:

-  Consider apprenticeships as junior management positions and mentorships for those already within your organization.
-  Leadership and job-skills training will help retain staff as team members encourage career orientation and commitment.
-  Recognition and team building events create a better sense of camaraderie.
-  Perks such as complimentary nights can be cost-effective rewards.
-  While flexible hours may be difficult to implement universally, allow departments to make their own accommodations.
-  Referral bonuses can often deliver much-needed additional staff at all levels.
-  Look at the back-of-house conditions that your staffers call their home. When was the last time you invested in making it more inviting?

JANE KELLY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

payroll for deeper analysis. Larger properties might wish to consider dedicated property-maintenance solutions that manage resources, escalate work orders, track issues by room or equipment type, and register warranties and automate inventory levels.

Artificial intelligence can bolster revenue management through the analysis of past booking trends and competitive offers to adjust room rates instantaneously. Here, the comp set isn't fixed but adjusts based upon which properties guests are searching. AI-powered data mapping solutions ensure all your property's information is accurately reflected across every booking platform. Chatbots respond to most every repetitive guest inquiry, freeing your staff for the more complex issues.

Available programs offer cross-platform online reputation management (see article on page 34) with easy-to-understand admin tools. Guest satisfaction surveys can be fine tuned based on what the guest experienced. Thus, the results are better and more useful. Marketing automation

like this allows you to drill down through your CRM to deliver the right message at the right time to the right guest. In effect, your property becomes a one-on-one marketer without the need for excessive labor in this department.

Build your tech stack judiciously. You need a business strategy. Remember that integration is critical. All technology requires training and a commitment to delivery.

To close, Anil Taneja, Managing Director of Palm Holdings, offers these words of encouragement: "The pandemic has reminded us that this business thrives on pennies. Whether it's one saved or one added to the ADR, each makes a world of difference." ■



Together, Larry and Adam Mogelonsky represent one of the world's most published

writing teams in hospitality, with over a decade's worth of material online. As the partners of Hotel Mogel Consulting Limited, a Toronto-based consulting practice, Larry focuses on asset management, sales, and operations while Adam specializes in hotel technology and marketing. Their experience encompasses properties around the world, both branded and independent, and ranging from luxury and boutique to select-service. Their work includes six books "Are You an Ostrich or a Llama?" (2012), "Llamas Rule" (2013), "Hotel Llama" (2015), "The Llama is Inn" (2017), "The Hotel Mogel" (2018) and "More Hotel Mogel" (2020). You can reach Larry at larry@hotelmogel.com or Adam at adam@hotelmogel.com.

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FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE



The challenge of opening a new hotel during a pandemic

by EDWARD E. SNOEKS

ASEVERY HOTELIER KNOWS ALL TOO WELL, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has proven to be a challenging (at best) and terrifying (at worst) time in this industry. Many plans for expansion, new construction, and increased services have been put on hold. Some hotels have closed, and many are in a holding pattern while the world slowly gets back on track and the ship begins to right itself.

But, in spite of the uncertainty, some properties are implementing new plans for growth and looking to a more certain future. For example, when news began to spread about the upcoming launch of Meliá Chiang Mai, the first five-star hotel to open in Thailand since the onset of the pandemic, the response was generally one of surprise, if not outright pessimism.

“Wow, you’re brave.” “It’s a grim time to run a hotel, much less open a new one.” “Why, of all times, open a new hotel now?”

Despite the arched eyebrows, there’s indeed a list of compelling reasons behind this new 260-key urban hotel’s opening, and there are lessons to be learned that can be implemented in properties big and small, old and new.

SILVER LININGS

Chiang Mai hasn’t welcomed international tourists for 18 months and counting. The

devastation on the ground is palpable. According to the Northern Chapter of the Thai Hotels Association, a survey of some 40 hotels in Chiang Mai has revealed less than 10% occupancy throughout the pandemic. And it’s estimated that more than 70% of people in tourism-related businesses have lost their jobs, many of whom have mouths to feed and bills to pay.

But Meliá Chiang Mai will open with about 150 employees and will eventually employ a total of 240 people, more than 99% percent of whom are Thai nationals,

thus providing much-needed employment and wages, which will allow the workers to support and take care of their families.

As there isn’t much else happening in Chiang Mai at present, word about the new hotel spread like wildfire throughout the local hospitality industry. During construction, the hotel received hundreds and hundreds of job applications from people locally and across Thailand even before making an earnest effort to advertise positions or conduct recruitment drives. These job seekers are people with strong

“Based on what a hotel initially learns about its guests’ preferences, management can better focus on scrutinizing and improving the guest experience relatively quickly wherever possible.”

hospitality experience who lost previous jobs as a result of COVID-19, so the large number of quality applicants isn't surprising.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

As can be expected, there have been some issues opening a hotel during these unprecedented times. There have been delays with the shipment of construction materials and supplies from overseas, and the pace of construction has been impacted by interprovincial lockdowns,

causing challenges with regards to labor and the movement of goods.

But, in contrast to what many in the industry are reporting, hiring hasn't been as big a challenge because the people in this area are keen to be part of something exciting happening in their industry and the local talent pool is immense. This is at least partly due the relative lack of alternative employment options currently in the area, but it has been proven that a healthy workplace culture can attract workers in a place even where jobs are more competitive.

In addition to being hugely beneficial for local workers and their families, prompting a ripple effect for the local economy, Meliá Chiang Mai has provided a morale boost for the local tourism industry, sending a signal that things will get better, though it's still difficult to pinpoint exactly when the industry and economy will improve thanks to COVID-19's constant moving of the goalposts.

LESSONS FOR ALL

Opening a new hotel or expanding an existing one doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing proposition, particularly during a pandemic even though business will be tough while international travel is still restricted. But, taking a glass-half-full approach, this affords management teams a unique opportunity to fine tune operations before large numbers of travelers return. Despite all the research that's conducted before a hotel opens or a new service is added, there are always things we expect to appeal to guests that don't and vice versa.

For example, it's much more difficult to improve your culinary landscape and wellness offerings when you're tied up with the demands of the hotel's daily operations. Based on what a hotel initially learns about its guests' preferences, management can better focus on scrutinizing and improving the guest experience relatively quickly wherever possible.

Selfishly, we can't help but be optimistic about the future of Chiang Mai's tourism industry, as it's one of the most popular places to visit on any travel itinerary to Thailand. But, that doesn't mean expansion is limited strictly to hotels in exotic locales. The bigger picture is that the economy will rebound and business as usual will return. The pandemic has lasted a long time and there's a lot of pent-up demand for travel. Will you be ready?

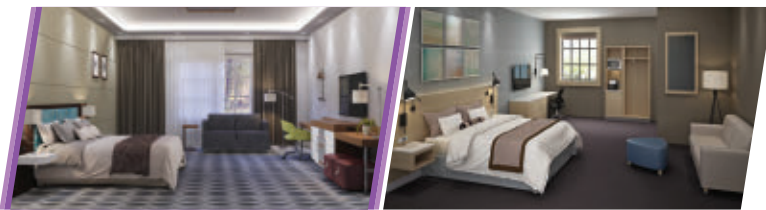
There's no playbook for launching a hotel, or even operating an existing one, amid a pandemic. We're all writing this story ourselves as we go, all the while thinking about how we'll put it all into action. As the old adage goes, fortune favors the brave. ■

Edward E. Snoeks is the General Manager of Meliá Chiang Mai.

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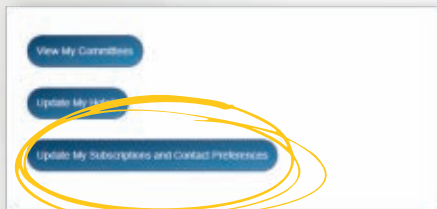
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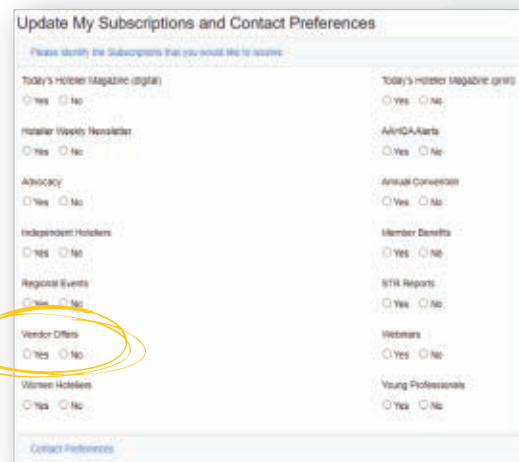
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Surf's Up

When looking at capital sources, which wave are you going to ride?

by RUSHI SHAH

TRADITIONAL BANKS, commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS) conduits, SBA, and other government guaranteed program lenders may dominate commercial real estate industry headlines, but there are other capital market players making significant contributions to the \$300-billion annual financing market. Also on the field are insurance companies, bridge funds that use either commercial real estate collateralized loan obligations (CRE CLO) execution to capture liquidity or leverage warehouse lines of credits to fund loans, and commercial real estate's hidden gem, credit unions.

INSURANCE COMPANIES

There are two main types of insurance companies: property and casualty insurance companies, and life insurance companies. Unhampered by FDIC and other strict federal lending regulations, insurance companies have the flexibility to fund out-of-box transactions. They are also able to offer non-recourse money

through a less-cumbersome process than CMBS and with 25- to 30-year fixed terms for stabilized assets. But it's not all good news for borrowers. Because an insurance company's balance sheet is funded by the premiums it receives on the policies it writes, most have more conservative investment policies than other capital providers and see little upside to take on additional risk. As a result, they aren't looking to make money from real estate lending operations.

In fact, a typical insurance company won't write a senior mortgage at more than 65% loan to value, and most will also avoid hospitality and other higher risk asset classes. However, we've seen a recent rise in life insurance lending in commercial real estate as middle market and large private equity players have acquired insurance companies for the purpose of using those firms' balance sheets to write commercial real estate loans. Even so, hotels remain difficult to finance due to their risk. In some situations, a life insurance company may offer a slightly higher priced bridge loan for transitional assets

that have yet to stabilize. Some insurance companies would selectively lend on stabilized hotels.

BRIDGE FUNDS

Bridge funds are essentially a pooled fund with multiple limited partners or investors, including large high-net worth family offices; corporate pension, sovereign wealth, and teachers' union funds; and city, state, and large university endowments. These investors anchor the fund and are then followed by smaller, sophisticated investors. Bridge funds usually target a 10% to 15% all-in return for their investors. For a fund to achieve this level of return, it recycles the capital of the fund in and out of loans using mechanisms such as the CRE CLO market. CRE CLO is a securitized vehicle akin to a CMBS loan. However, CRE CLOs afford borrowers more flexibility at a lower price than a balance sheet bridge loan and are best suited for cash-flowing assets, or properties in transition and almost stabilized. With plenty of liquidity in today's market, CRE CLO bridge loans are currently pricing from 200



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KATERINA KIRILOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

to 350 basis points over 1 month LIBOR, which translates into interest rates from 2.25% to 3.75%. These loans are typically offered with two-year terms plus an option to extend for an additional year and are available for hotel properties.

Like CMBS, CRE CLO loans are pooled by the issuer and include both an investment and equity piece, but they aren't tranching into as many pieces as a CMBS pool. The lender writing the loan will typically keep the equity piece of the loan pool and sell the senior piece into the bond markets through a process called securitization. With today's current interest rate environment, investors are eager to invest in floating-rate bonds, which has increased both the demand for floating CRE CLO-backed loans and the number of bridge funds making them.

Bridge funds also use warehouse lending to capitalize on the current market. In this situation, a fund establishes a line of credit against a well-defined box of loans with a bank or other financial institution. These line lenders will then outline approved criteria for senior loans they will

take as collateral for the bridge fund. This is classic loan-on-loan leverage. Warehouse lines are normally priced at LIBOR plus 150 to 200 basis points, which allows bridge funds to lend money at 4% to 7% to the end user, while still delivering double-digit returns to their investors. Bridge funds that use warehouse lines typically target cash-flowing assets, including hospitality.

CREDIT UNIONS

Credit unions enjoy all the positive benefits of a bank without the same regulatory and compliance pressures. This arbitrage allows credit unions to be more nimble, flexible, and competitive in their lending. Because they don't have extensive origination staff, credit unions rely on external resources to fuel their loan pipeline, making them hyper-focused on forging relationships with mortgage bankers who can provide deal flow. While credit unions are likely to require full recourse, at certain lower leverage points non-recourse is an option with some credit unions. Best of all, they typically offer long-term loans without pre-payment penalties, and

some national and regional players will lend on hotels for the right borrower or mortgage banker.

Relationships are everything in commercial real estate capital markets. To view a full landscape of available capital sources, borrowers should work with an intermediary who is full time in the market and understands the inner workings of all variations of stakeholders. ■



Rushi Shah is Principal and CEO of the commercial mortgage and real estate investment banking firm and AAHOA Allied Member Mag Mile Capital. As a leader in hospitality financing,

Shah specializes in structuring and placing high leverage, nonrecourse bridge and permanent debt with cash out for full- and limited-service hotels nationwide. Since joining the firm's predecessor, Aries Capital, in 2015, Shah has structured and closed hundreds of millions in financing for all property types. Shah has held previous positions at Northern Trust and has an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business.

Avoiding an

ambush



New small business bankruptcy procedures streamline relief for financially strapped hotel owners

by ROBERT W. LANNAN

FOR A FINANCIALLY DISTRESSED HOTEL OWNER, Chapter 11 bankruptcy is sometimes the last – and best – option for reorganizing and saving the business. However, until recently, Chapter 11 cases were unavoidably cumbersome, time consuming, and expensive, even for small businesses. Moreover, the likelihood of a small business owner still owning a business emerging from Chapter 11 was extremely low.

In 2020, a new set of provisions within Chapter 11 called Subchapter V (“five”) went into effect, making reorganization in

Chapter 11 faster, less complicated, and less expensive for many small businesses. It’s now a process in which a business owner’s equity interest in the business is more likely to survive, and the new law’s effective date coincided with the escalation of COVID-19. Moreover, in the CARES Act and subsequent legislation, Congress increased the limit on the debt a small business owner must hold to reorganize under Subchapter V.

Before the CARES Act, a business could carry no more than \$2,725,625 in debt to be eligible for Subchapter V bankruptcy

filing. As of this writing, until March 27, 2022, a business may hold up to \$7,500,000 in debt and still be eligible to do so. (By the time this article is printed, Congress may have further postponed this sunset date.)

This increase in eligibility was followed by an increase in Subchapter V filings but not as many in the hotel industry as some had expected. Federal relief, including the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans, and forbearance by many lenders from foreclosures have saved many small hotel businesses from bankruptcy. However, for other small hotel businesses in financial distress, Subchapter V is the best available remedy.

In any Chapter 11 case, the objective of the reorganizing business (the “debtor”) is to obtain court approval (“confirmation”) of a “plan of reorganization,” pursuant to which the debtor pays its creditors while continuing to operate its business. This distinguishes Chapter 11 from Chapter 7, in which full control of the debtor’s assets is automatically given to a trustee, who liquidates the assets and pays the creditors from the proceeds. Subchapter V of Chapter 11

does provide for the appointment of a trustee, but the trustee’s powers are much more limited than in Chapter 7. For small business debtors, Subchapter V facilitates confirmation of a plan of reorganization in three ways: by (1) making it faster, (2) making it less complicated and expensive, and (3) reducing the debtor’s required obligations to some creditors.

FASTER

Subchapter V implements procedures to get a small business through the bankruptcy process much more quickly.



For other small hotel businesses in financial distress, Subchapter V is the best available remedy.”

This is accomplished partly by placing fire under the feet of the debtor. In an ordinary Chapter 11 case, the debtor is given an exclusive right to file a plan of reorganization for a period of 120 days (the “exclusivity period”), which may be extended. Afterward, creditors may propose their own competing plans. In a Subchapter V case, only the debtor may file a plan of reorganization, and it must be filed within 90 days, and an extension is more difficult to obtain. As another example, in an ordinary Chapter 11 case, there is a two-step confirmation process in which a debtor must first obtain court-approval of a “disclosure statement” highlighting important components of its plan of reorganization, and then must use that disclosure statement to solicit approval of the plan from creditors.

LESS EXPENSIVE

Elimination of the requirement for disclosure statements is one of several means by which Subchapter V makes the Chapter 11 process less expensive for a small business debtor. Another is the virtual elimination of creditors’ committees. If an ordinary Chapter 11 case is large enough, unsecured creditors can form an official committee that plays a role in the case and whose attorneys and other professionals are paid by the debtor. Subchapter V imposes a

presumption against creditors’ committees in small business cases. Unlike other Chapter 11 debtors, debtors in Subchapter V are exempt from paying fees to the U.S. Trustee’s Office, an agency of the Justice Department involved in the bankruptcy process.

EASIER CONFIRMATION OF PLANS OF REORGANIZATION

It is easier in Subchapter V than in other Chapter 11 cases for a debtor to obtain confirmation of a plan of reorganization. Ordinarily, a Chapter 11 plan does not allow the owner of a business to retain any equity interest unless all classes of creditors are either paid in full or vote to accept the plan. This “absolute priority” rule does not apply in Subchapter V. It’s replaced by a less-stringent test in which the secured interests of lenders with liens on property must be protected and the debtor must contribute all “projected disposable income” into the plan for a period of three-to-five years. This makes it easier for a small-business debtor to emerge from bankruptcy as a viable business with the same ownership after a plan of reorganization is carried out.

This article merely scratches the surface to provide a few examples of ways in which, through Subchapter V, Congress has made the Chapter 11 reorganization process easier for small business debtors. This new component of bankruptcy law will be a valuable resource for financially distressed owners of small to mid-sized hotels well into the future. ■

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Keep your best people and avoid an ocean of problems

by DEL ROSS

THE UNPREDICTABLE MARKET OF 2021 hasn't settled into anything resembling a groove during the fourth quarter. Labor, the biggest and most controllable expense for every hotel, is out of control, and high turnover rates are making the labor problem even worse. But, silver-lining alert, this is not a problem without a solution. Hotels are finding success at retaining and attracting good people through workplace culture-building efforts as one potential fix, and many also are turning to technology-based remedies.

For example, though employee turnover remains predictable, hotels can implement a sound labor-management solution, thus allowing them to improve employee retention and avoid the 30% extra cost they incur every time they replace a team member.

To address any problem, it must first be defined. Accordingly, the three keys to predicting turnover and preventing it are tenure, wages, and work hours. Tenure refers to the length of time an associate has been on the job. As it turns out, people tend to quit at predictable times, and this timetable has gotten shorter since the scramble to hire new people began in March 2021. For roles like housekeeping, new hires tend to be most likely to leave after three weeks, six weeks, and 12 weeks, the latter of which is the point at which they become fully productive.

Tenure isn't the only indicator of retention risk, however. Wages are another key element to consider. Hotels need to monitor each associate's compensation compared to their peers in the hotel and relative to the same job in the overall market. Today's labor market moves very quickly, so managers need up-to-date, accurate information, obtained legally, to compare their associates' wages and determine if there's a risk. If an employee is being paid below-market wages or is underpaid relative to their coworkers, that's a major indicator there's significant turnover risk.

Work hours are the third predictor of turnover. From our data, we know that 30% of full-time eligible associates in the hotel industry aren't getting 40 hours of paid work per week. With fewer hours, employees are earning less, making it impossible for even the most dedicated team members to stay onboard. Conversely, excessive work hours create burnout. While many hotel workers enjoy higher paychecks thanks to overtime shifts, the jobs are often physically demanding and tiring. If an associate has worked excessive hours for many weeks in a row, the possibility of turnover becomes high.

THE NUMBERS GAME

When these three factors align – associate tenure, relative wages, and work hours – a reliable technology solution can identify individual team members who are likely

to quit before this happens. Good technology also can identify ways to avoid the risk and save the employee.

Here's an example: Let's say a new housekeeper on staff for three weeks has five "retention-risk" flags, including tardiness, taking too long to clean rooms, and has had conversations with management already. Meanwhile, another housekeeper has been on staff for one year but only has three flags. The data tells us there's a much better chance the new housekeeper will quit.

"We work hard to find the best people and teach them to serve our guests according to our standards and expectations," said Neel Shah, President of Hotel Evolution. "It's devastating when they leave us, so we're excited about cost-effective tools, which can prevent this from happening."

Think about the expenses of replacing an associate. Based on adding 30% of the annualized cost of onboarding a new employee, let's consider a housekeeper who makes \$35,000 a year. If that housekeeper works 40 hours a week for 50 weeks a year, you'd add about \$10,000 to replace that housekeeper. However, if you're able to keep that housekeeper from quitting, you net \$9,000 in savings for that position thanks to retention risk technology. That's equivalent to about 90 revenue-producing room nights!

Hotel turnover has always been high, and this year, it has gotten demonstrably worse. Annualized turnover rates have doubled since pre-COVID. As of June 2021, housekeeping retention rates were trading at 163% a year vs. 109% in 2019. Hotels are replacing every housekeeping role 1.5 times this year, plus adding about \$14,000 with the cost to that role. Guest-service roles also are hard to keep, with turnover up to 155% annualized in 2021 compared with 2019 attrition rates of 88% for this critical, guest-facing role. Assistant GM turnover rates also have soared to 103% annualized, compared with 35% pre-COVID.

Unfortunately, labor in our industry will remain a chief concern for the foreseeable future. As a result, many hotels are adopting labor-management systems to optimize their highest cost, improve productivity, and boost GOP margins. Investing in time-saving, automated, smart technology to manage labor issues might once have been viewed as an extra perk, but they are fast becoming a new baseline. ■



Del Ross is the Chief Revenue Officer for AAHOA Silver Industry Partner Hotel Effectiveness. An expert in hotel profitability optimization, his extensive experience in the hotel industry includes distribution channel management, customer loyalty and lifecycle management, digital marketing, and e-commerce.

SEEING EYE TO EYE

What is a franchisor's obligation to deal with its franchisees in good faith?

by J. MICHAEL DADY and RACHEL D. ZAIGER

MANY FRANCHISE agreements provide limited (if any) commitments on the part of the franchisor to deal with its franchisees in good faith or in a commercially reasonable manner. Instead, franchisors commonly reserve the right to act, and make decisions, with practically unlimited discretion (i.e., sole discretion). When it comes time for franchisees to obtain their franchisor's consent, either as it pertains to a renewal or to a proposed transfer, or to adhere to the franchisor's unreasonable demands, many franchisees feel as if they have no choice but to accede to their franchisor's unreasonable demands or potentially be left in the perilous situation of being subject to termination.

Common instances throughout the franchise relationship in which franchisors seek to act unreasonably in exercising discretion include: (1) seeking to impose

a prohibitively expensive system-wide update/renovation requirement; (2) designating a system-wide requirement to update to a new computer POS system (that, potentially, one of its affiliates created and thereby directly generates revenue from franchisees); (3) designating one of its affiliates as the sole approved supplier for products and services necessary to operate the franchised business (and attaching unreasonable mark-ups on such required products and services to be purchased); (4) selling items in competition with its franchisees to expand the system and generate more profit (for the franchisor); (5) electing to terminate a franchisee; (6) electing to renew, or not renew, a franchisee; and/or (7) electing to approve, or disapprove, a proposed transfer of a franchisee's franchise.

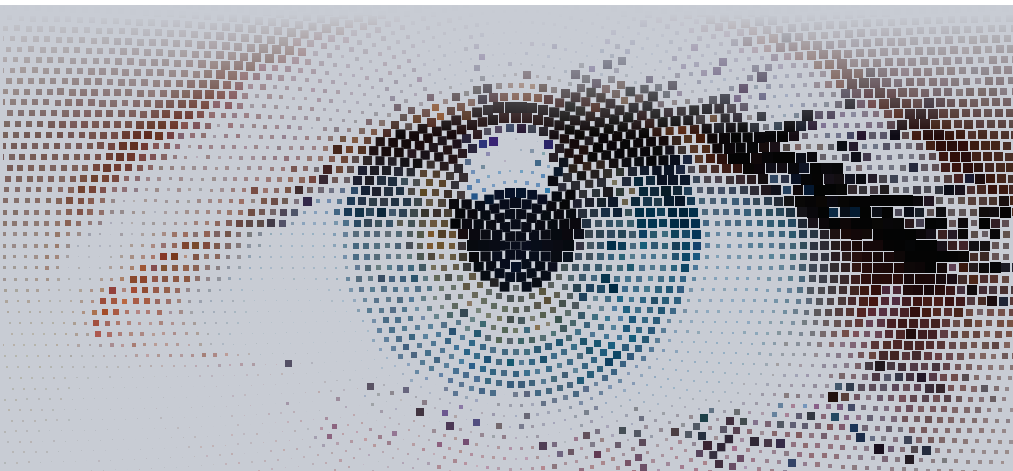
ACTION PLAN

When faced with such instances, franchisees should be adamant in ensuring the

franchisor is dealing with them in a manner consistent with the contract-in-law principle of "good faith and fair dealing."

The judge-made law (called "the common law") in essentially every state will typically impose a covenant of good faith and fair dealing in every contract to effectuate the reasonable expectations of the parties to the agreement. This covenant commonly applies to a franchisor-franchisee relationship, and a franchisor may be held liable for a violation of the covenant.

While different courts in different states define the covenant differently, simply put, the "covenant includes subjective and objective elements, both of which must be satisfied. The subjective element 'prohibits one party from acting to deprive the other of the benefit of the contract.' The objective element requires each party to act 'in a manner that a reasonable person would regard as fair.'" *Anchorage Chrysler Ctr., Inc. v. DaimlerChrysler Motors Corp.*, 221 P.3d 977, 992 (Alaska 2009).



When determining whether to assert a cause of action based on the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, and how best to do so, it is important to consult the applicable state’s law designated in the applicable franchise agreement, as some states require that the covenant be alleged either as an entirely separate cause of action or as an element tied to a claim.

The covenant of good faith and fair dealing also is frequently incorporated into franchise agreements as a separate “good faith” contract provision, generally located toward the end of the franchise agreement. However, many franchisees might be surprised to know that such “good faith” provisions are commonly one-sided, e.g., they are drafted in a way that only requires that the franchisee deal with the franchisor in a manner consistent with the covenant of good faith and fair dealing, but they do not expressly provide a reciprocal obligation on the part of the franchisor to deal with the franchisee in a manner consistent with the covenant of good faith and fair dealing.

If a franchisee is faced with signing a new franchise agreement, either upon renewal or as a condition of obtaining an additional unit, the franchisee should seek

to have the franchise agreement altered so that it includes a mutual good-faith requirement. For example, “The parties to this relationship agree to deal with each other honestly, fairly, in good faith, and in a non-discriminatory, commercially reasonable manner.”

While many franchisees hope they’ll never have a dispute with their franchisor, the reality is that disputes do happen. When they do, franchisees should be unwavering in their position that the franchisor is obligated to deal with them in a manner consistent with the covenant of good faith and fair dealing. ■



J. Michael Dady, Esq., and Rachel D. Zaiger, Esq., and the other eight lawyers in their firm, Dady & Gardner, P.A., limit their nationwide practice to helping hotel franchisees, and other franchisees and dealers, preserve and enhance the value of their businesses as effectively and efficiently as possible. To learn more about

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When it comes time for franchisees to obtain their franchisor’s consent, either as it pertains to a renewal or to a proposed transfer, or to adhere to the franchisor’s unreasonable demands, many franchisees feel as if they have no choice but to accede to their franchisor’s unreasonable demands or potentially be left in the perilous situation of being subject to termination.”

Pull your head out of the sand

Dealing with bad reviews head on

by STEVE J. LEWIS

SPEND ANY AMOUNT OF TIME TALKING SHOP WITH HOTEL OWNERS AND you're very likely to broach the subject of how a property can get rid of bad reviews. The simple truth is, unless a review's comments are derogatory or contain foul language, the review is likely here to stay. That's certainly not what hotel owners are hoping to hear but, as the old cliché goes, the truth hurts.

However, there is a ray of sunlight in this situation. Most experts agree on three techniques or processes that will drastically help mitigate those bad reviews.

1 Intercept the bad review by engaging upset travelers at the front desk with a positive helpful approach. Let them know that you genuinely care and your goal is to resolve the issues to their satisfaction. Offer to send them an internal review so you can take it to the highest level to get it resolved. We often can resolve the issue long before it becomes a costly bad review on TripAdvisor, Google, Expedia, Booking, or Medallia.

2 Answer the bad review with a professional response and be sure to incorporate some of their complaint so the next person who reads that response knows you care. It's estimated that 82% of bad reviews can be neutralized with a professional courteous response. Travelers realize there are two sides to every story. Beware, if you don't answer the bad review, you give travelers who are looking at your hotel the impression that the review is true. This is mainly because no one from the hotel bothered to respond, which leads to a conclusion that the issue raised must have merit.

3 Bury the bad review if it slipped through the interception process at the front desk by asking guests who had a good experience to write their own reviews. It's estimated the average traveler looks at eight reviews before they decide to buy your room or look for your competitor's hotel.

Always make certain those eight reviews are selling how great your hotel is. Ensure that bad reviews will never be allowed to appear in the top-eight review list. Unfortunately, if the bad reviews appear initially, then it's tantamount to telling the potential guest that they shouldn't stay at your hotel and should instead look at your competitors' hotels.

Additionally, you can use basic insights into the psychology of the review process to help avoid bad reviews entirely. When guests check into your hotel, both the guests and the hotel staff have unspoken expectations. The guests expect the room to be clean, pool to be blue, coffee to be hot, staff to be hospitable, and so on. On the other hand, the hotel staff expects the guests' credit card to clear, the guests

to be respectful of others, and the rooms not to be ruined.

So, when time for checkout comes, the guests feel they paid for the clean and quiet hotel experience, and they aren't obliged to review for something that is totally expected of a hotel.

On the other hand, the hotel staff, especially the GM or owner, cannot understand





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why guests don't take the time to write good reviews about their hotel.

If you want to achieve great reviews, then don't forget to focus on small details. These little things seem unimportant but surprisingly, these are what matter to guests. Creating simple-yet-unique approaches in serving the guests will set you apart from the standard services

offered by most hotels. If the guests feel special, they will feel appreciative and will most likely write a good review for your hotel.

Online reviews have increasingly become the front of your digital reputation. Reviews help you get noticed, lead to more bookings, improve search engine rankings, inform your business, and convince

travelers to pick up the phone and call you. However, your hotel's reputation can be ruined by a single, uncontrolled negative comment or review. This remains true. Your business can potentially be destroyed online with just a click of a button. What people read about you and your business matters. Reviews greatly affect your hotel's reputation. It is in your power to protect your brand, as well as control your reputation. A stable hotel reputation has a direct impact on medium- and long-term occupancy and revenue levels.

People read reviews because they offer valuable guidance from travelers who booked and stayed at your hotel or motel. Make it easier for travelers to decide. Let your hotel reputation work for you. ■

Steve J. Lewis is the founder & CEO of Guest Trends.

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AAHOA MEMBERS IN ACTION



Vice Chairman Nishant (Neal) Patel (left) and Treasurer Bharat Patel were welcomed by Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP®) CEO Frank Wolfe to the Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition and Conference (HITEC®), the world's largest and oldest hospitality technology event.



Upper Midwest Regional Director Mehul (Mike) Patel had the opportunity to chat with Pat Pacious, President & CEO of Choice Hotels, during the Choice Hotels Owners Council Meeting.



Regional Director Mahendra (MZ) Patel (third from left) was joined by AAHOA Officers (from left) Treasurer Bharat Patel, Chair Vinay Patel, President & CEO Ken Greene, Vice Chairman Nishant (Neal) Patel, and Secretary Miraj S. Patel at the Mid Atlantic Regional Conference & Trade Show.



Past Chair (2020-20221) Biran Patel (far left) shared his tips and best practices for de-flagging or switching to a brand or "Collection" during the "Conversion: Owners, Operators, Brands and Guests...Who Benefits?" panel at The Lodging Conference in Phoenix.



The "Hotel Values: What is Your Hotel Worth in Today's Market?" panel at The Lodging Conference gave Treasurer Bharat Patel (center) the opportunity impart his knowledge of valuation to maximize property tax relief or buy or sell a hotel.



All eyes were on Vice Chairman Nishant (Neal) Patel during the “Capitalizing on Tech” panel at The Lodging Conference as he opined on the latest pilot programs and technological developments for both internal and guest-facing applications.



During the “COVID’s Impact: A Deeper Dive into What has Changed the Way We Do Business” panel at The Lodging Conference, Secretary Miraj S. Patel (second from right) shared his thoughts on how brand, management, and ownership relationships have evolved and all of the transformations that have taken place in our industry post-pandemic.



Chair Vinay Patel welcomed attendees to the socializing portion of the AAHOA Reception at The Lodging Conference.



President & CEO Ken Greene gave an association update to attendees during the AAHOA Reception at The Lodging Conference.



Female Director Eastern Division Lina Patel (seated, third from left) and Regional Director Sanjay M. Patel (seated, third from right) welcomed an enthusiastic crowd to the Alabama Women Hoteliers Town Hall meeting in Birmingham.

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1550 Market Street #500
Denver, CO 80202
Ph: (303) 809-9916
Web: www.sonesta.com

Sonesta International Hotels Corporation is one of the fastest-growing hospitality companies in the U.S., currently celebrating an approximate 350% increase in its managed hotel portfolio since August 2020. Encompassing nearly 300 hotels, Sonesta operates across seven brands throughout the U.S., Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Peru and St. Maarten. Sonesta also owns Red Lion Hotels Corporation, boasting eight additional brands, consisting of nearly 900 franchise properties across the U.S. and Canada. Visit Sonesta.com/development or franchise.rlhco.com.

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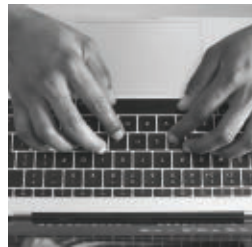
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A Message From Our President

For the last 18 months, many of our longtime friends and associates have dealt with the effects of the pandemic.

It has been heartbreaking.

We believe the hospitality industry is on the cusp of our own breakout as the country continues to navigate through the pandemic and gets closer to an environment of normalcy.

That's why we have decided to take a crucial step to support our partners and this industry we love with unprecedented discounts.

Effective immediately, **HOTELSIGNS.com** will reduce the cost for **ALL signage*** by 20%. Join SignStars® and check out online to receive an additional 5% off for a total of 25% off, plus free shipping.

Our company is very fortunate to have been busy during the pandemic, which enabled us to substantially keep all of our Sign Artisans working around the clock and supporting our customers nationwide.

In our free time (we had a little), we focused our energy on improving operational efficiency and enhancing our customer offerings. These improvements included the purchase of new equipment and empowering in-house task forces to tackle projects such as closing communication gaps, reducing production lead times, improving factory layout and material flow, 6S implementation, and enhancing employee training, hiring, and retention.

It has been extremely gratifying to see all of these in-house task forces come together with practical and creative solutions to our everyday challenges of providing world-class customer service and product value!

It is now time for us to support you with these major discounts!

For all orders booked in November and December 2021, shipping in either 2021 or 2022, **HOTELSIGNS.com** will reduce the costs for **ALL signage*** by 20%. Join SignStars® and check out online to receive an additional 5% off for a total of 25% off, plus free shipping. We guarantee brand compliance for those brands that we have the honor to support. We guarantee regulation compliance across the board with no small print. We guarantee all of your signs for the Life-of-the-Building. *And, we will never be undersold.*

Hank McMahon, President

*Some exclusions apply, see website for details.

